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ABSTRACT

The findings of a task force study of New York City's implementation of a State dropout prevention law are provided in this report. An introduction describes briefly the historical background of the legislation, called the Attendance Improvement-Dropout Prevention program, which provided $28 million in supplemental funds to school districts with poor attendance rates. The introduction also outlines the study's purpose and organization. Five chapters follow, each addressing a different aspect of the legislation's implementation in New York City, which received 80% of the available funds. Chapter 1 discusses the political context in which the legislation emerged. An analysis of the explicit provisions of the legislation is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents a chronology of the various intergovernmental actions which were required to bring the policy to the doorstep of implementation. Chapter 4 details the efforts of five community school districts to plan and implement programs. It pays special attention to the political and organizational characteristics of those districts, as well as the attitudes of the school personnel which circumscribed program selection and implementation. In Chapter 5 the findings of the various parts of the study are summarized and the conclusions of the earlier sections are related to each other. An appendix contains a description of the methodology used in the study. (KH)

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a first step

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The Story of New York City's Implementation of Education Law 3602(25) Relating to Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention

A REPORT OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

by Eileen Foley, Project Director

& Constancia Warren Ph.D., Research Associate

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The authors, of course, remain responsible for the accuracy of the facts presented and the interpretation given those facts.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

Over the past decade, New York State's school dropout rate has increased sharply. A recent Office of Education report estimated that twenty five percent of those anticipated to graduate in 1982 in New York State had dropped out.[1]

Responding to these alarming facts, in March, 1984, the State Legislature created a new form of categorical aid as part of the 1984-85 education budget. Initiated by the chair of the Assembly Education Committee, Jose Serrano, the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention program provided $28 million in supplemental funds to school districts with poor attendance rates in the hope that a dramatic assault would be initiated.

The appropriation was distributed by formula among 70 districts. Reflecting the magnitude of New York City's truancy problem, City schools received $22.5 million; 80 percent of available funds. Upstate districts were the other major program beneficiaries.[2]

Purpose of the Study

Given the checkered past of the best-conceived efforts to effect local education activity, the intractability of the dropout problem in the face of repeated Board of Education interventions, and the relatively short period of time for local districts to develop programs under this legislation, instant success appeared unlikely.

As part of its long commitment to encourage the evolution of more effective schools for dropout-prone youngsters, PEA undertook a

study of the implementation of the AI/DP program at the local community school district level. (At a later date we plan to study the program at the high school level.) By carefully monitoring and commenting on program development, we hoped to encourage school leaders to design and make operational, programs which integrated the best thinking on dropout prevention. This interest in implementation developed as a function of the common observation, at all levels of government, of the discrepancy between policy intentions and program outcomes and the lingering suspicion that system-wide interventions so frequently fell short of the mark not because they were fundamentally flawed, but because they were never fully implemented. By examining the policy formation/program development continuum and the interaction between these two spheres, we aimed to garner wisdom for future dropout prevention efforts.

In particular, PEA is interested in policy focused on the following two goals:

1. The development in schools of structured systems of guidance and support for youngsters, and
2. The improvement of teaching/learning relationships.

As no guidance or support structure added on to a school could, in our judgment, overcome the negative valence of poor school climate and ineffective instruction, realizing the first goal, while vital, would never, in the long run, suffice. By studying the implementation issues attending the first and much more realizable goal, we hoped both to speed implementation of that objective and learn how to tackle the latter.

Organization of the Study

Social scientists have identified five factors intervening between the formation and implementation of a policy. They call attention to the role of the political-cultural environment, the policy itself, patterns of interorganizational communication, characteristics of the implementing agencies, and attitudes of the implementers. This study follows that framework.

Chapter I discusses the political context in which the legislation emerged. An analysis of the explicit provisions of the legislation is presented in Chapter II. Chapter III presents a chronology of the various intergovernmental actions which were required to bring the policy to the door step of implementation. Chapter IV details the efforts of five community school districts to plan and implement programs. It pays special attention to the political and organizational characteristics of those districts, as well as the attitudes of the school personnel which circumscribed program selection and implementation. In Chapter V the findings of the various part of the study are summarized and the conclusions of the earlier sections are woven together. A description of the Methodology appears in the Appendix.

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CHAPTER I

A Brief Legislative History

The Political Content

In early 1984 Secretary of Education Terrell Bell released a report verifying what most education-minded New Yorkers suspected. The percentage of students dropping out of the State's schools had risen sharply between 1972 and 1982, and the trend was nationwide. Bell's report estimated that one out of every three students in the United States was leaving high school without a diploma and one in every four students in New York State.[1]

The view from New York City was considerably worse. The Board of Education's 1983 Dropout Report had pegged the city rate at about 45%.[2] While this seemed scandalous enough, there were those who argued that the rate was substantially higher. In June 1983, ASPIRA of New York published a document claiming that as many as 68% of students entering ninth grade in New York City public schools never graduated from high school.[3]

Dropout rates have been a factor in judging the nation's schools for over a generation, but early school leaving has not been a hot national issue since 1972, the year the Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity issued a well-publicized report estimating that the national bill for failing to educate all American youth exceeded $78 billion annually -- in 1972 dollars. The estimate was based on projected lost revenues from high school dropouts aged 25-34.[4]

Given this context, when Jose Serrano, Chair of New York State Assembly Education Committee, announced a plan in February of 1984 to improve attendance and retention, he had little difficulty convincing New Yorkers of the necessity of a state level intervention. Governor Mario Cuomo's budget recommendations[5] and the New York State Regents' Action Plan[6] had, in fact, almost simultaneously with Serrano, surfaced a plan for improving pupil attendance and retention.

Mr. Serrano's plan, however, differed from the Regents'in one critical aspect. It provided substantial new aid to school districts falling below established attendance and retention standards rather than requiring that general aid be stretched to incorporate those services. New York City stood to garner a hefty $22 million of the $28 million[7] under the Serrano package. As such the plan touched a vital nerve in the City which the previous year (as generally) had received a mere 29 percent of state aid to educate 34 percent of all enrolled pupils of the State.[8]

As might be expected New York City and urban areas throughout the State rallied to support the plan. The only vaguely discouraging voice heard at the public hearing held at Park West High School in New York City was from the National Education Association of New York, the teachers' union whose membership base is outside the city. The NEA/NY believed that the plan mitigated against services to districts with lesser numbers of dropouts -- and, of course, it did.[9]

Despite that, the Assemblyman had no difficulty obtaining the full support of the Assembly Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee including Committee Chair James Donovan. "The whole world," an Albany insider said, "was talking about New York

City's dropout rate and it was taken for granted that most of the money was needed there... Donovan had recently held hearings in New York City and... that's what everyone discussed... Donovan could have treated this as a 'trade item' meaning he'd give us AI/DP if we gave him something else, but he didn't. Everyone basically accepted the rationality of the distribution, particularly since there are certain untouchables in the aid formula which are disequalizing and penalize New York City."[10]

The Creation of AI/DP

The AI/DP bill was negotiated in the floor of the legislature during the roughly forty-eight hour period in which the budget bill was carved out.

Districts requesting aid during the 1984-85 academic year were required to submit a plan to the State Education Department by August 1 (a) reviewing the records of all pupils entering ninth grade to identify those at risk of truancy or dropping out and (b) describing efforts to improve school attendance and reduce the number of dropouts. Approvable programs and services were to include but not to be limited to the services of additional staff in support of pupil personnel services including -- counseling, in-school suspension programs, work experience programs, diagnostic screening, computerized telephone contact systems and other services to improve student attendance and retention. Such services could be provided by contact with non-school based organi-

zations, but in no case could services that had been provided by the district in the 1983-84 school year be considered allowable costs for 1984-85.

Participating districts were further required under the law to submit a report to the Education Department by February 1, 1985 describing the implemented program. In future years, the legislation required that the report document improvements in attendance and retention resulting from the district's activities. Similarly, the commissioner was required to report to the legislature on March 1 on the effects of the program and his recommendations.[11]

The only serious obstacle to the bill occurred at the eleventh hour, after the Assembly had already reached an agreement with the Senate. The United Federation of Teachers and the New York City Board of Education expressed opposition to the categorical nature of the funding and requested the new aid be transmitted to the city as part of the operating aid formula. Both James Donovan, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Stanley Fink, Speaker of the Assembly, resisted their appeal. They insisted that accountability was desirable and necessary and recommended the bill to the legislature as originally formulated.[12] Given the interest of the public and the commitment of the legislature, the political climate for successful implementation could not have been better.

CHAPTER II

AI/DP As Policy

Social scientists have explored a number of factors in the nature of a policy which affect the implementation and impact of that policy. In particular they stress the role of clear policy standards and objectives, adequate monetary resources and appropriate enforcement activities.

This section will examine AI/DP legislation as policy per se and attempt to understand how the formulation of the policy interacted with implementation efforts.

The first question has do with the clarity of intent -- whether all the relevant parties understood the desired outcomes either as a function of the explicit language in the legislation, regulations and guidelines or through public policy statements made in the legislature, the press, or elsewhere.

All available evidence suggests that while educators in New York City understood the seriousness of the legislators' intent, there was a great deal of confusion regarding the specifics of this legislation especially with regard to three critical questions: who was to be served, what was to be done, and how it was to be done.

A May 22, 1984 New York Times article reports that Nathan Quinones, the then Acting Schools Chancellor, planned to use the "...state appropriation of $22.5 million for programs to improve the

high school dropout rate...not only in high schools but also in earlier grades...." The Acting Chancellor explained, "...for some youngsters the problem begins in earlier grades -- a lack of adjustment to school, a lack of progress in school, absenteeism in school...."[1]

The article illustrates the confusion which existed among informed persons regarding the target population. The common perception of the dropout problem being essentially a high school problem conditioned the The New York Times writer to expect that the money was allocated for that group and refer to the $22.5 million as money "for programs to improve the high school dropout rate." In fact, the legislation did not specify that this money was intended for high school age youngsters. It refers simply to "pupils with a high risk of truancy and academic failure...."

Among all of the official correspondences from the State, the greatest level of specificity regarding the target population appears in the "Introduction" to the Guidelines for Applications which instructs districts to "...target funds on school buildings with the lowest attendance rates and/or students with a high potential for dropping out of school."[2]

The "or" in the foregoing instruction substantially reduced the clarity and forcefulness of the directive. Clearly the high schools and the junior high schools had the worst attendance rates in New York City, but, as the Chancellor had suggested in his comments to The New York Times, the seeds of dropping out are planted early, and, as the legislation includes among the target population those "with a

high potential for dropping out," it can be read to permit services to elementary school age students.

Acting on this view of what was permissible, the Acting Schools Chancellor issued Special Circular No. 16 on May 25, 1984, explaining to the school system how the money would be allocated and for what it was intended. An allocation formula was developed which, as promised, spread the $22.5 million broadly throughout the school system with 60% going to the elementary and middle schools and 40% going to the high schools.[3] In repeated letters to the Chancellor and his senior staff, the City's education-oriented advocacy groups, organized by the Public Education Association (PEA) to monitor implementation, criticized the formula, arguing that it benefitted the larger districts regardless of the seriousness of their dropout problem. They sought a clearer statement of priorities and a better targeting of resources.[4] While concerned, the Chancellor's staff countered that the formula was essentially justifiable, and, that in addition, the time for changing it had passed.[5] The advocates -- including the United Parents Associations, ASPIRA Of New York, the New York Urban Coalition, the Puerto Rican-Latino Education Roundtable, the Center For Public Advocacy Research, PEA, and Advocates For Children -- went on to contact Assemblyman Serrano, the author of the bill, and State Commissioner Gordon Ambach asking for their intervention.[6]

The Assemblyman responded with a public criticism of the Chancellor. In a September 3, 1984 article in The New York Times, he said,"...the school system's new drop-out prevention programs do not

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focus on those students most likely to leave school -- those in the poorest neighborhoods and the highest grades ... instead of targeting ... to junior high schools and high schools in the city's most troubled neighborhoods, Mr. Quinones has instead put together programs that distribute the money to all grades and to all areas".[7]

Replying in the same article, Mr. Quinones said the programs were designed to comply with the legislation passed by the Legislature and the regulations from the State Education Department. He was supported by Gerald Freeborne, Deputy Commissioner at the State Education Department, who said that the state regulations set general procedures for identifying probable dropouts in all grades, and where the money was focused was left to the discretion of the local school districts.[8]

The language of the legislature was, unfortunately, not sufficiently instructive to communicate to those responsible for developing the regulatory language, whom the legislators intended to serve. The regulatory language developed by the State Education Department, as a consequence, left the city open to both a range of possibilities and a range of criticism.

While not as public a controversy as the targeting problem, the second issue of consequence had to do with the character of the interventions developed by the city. The law states, "... programs and services which may be approved ... shall include but not be limited to

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the services of additional staff in support of pupil personnel services including -- counseling, and the institution of new or additional programs for in-school suspension programs, work-experience, diagnostic screening, computerized telephone contact systems and other services designed to improve student attendance and retention rates."[9] The critical language here, for the advocacy groups who were monitoring the city's efforts, was "staff in support of pupil personnel services." The groups argued, in light of all that was known about the importance of personal contact to the persistence of at-risk youngsters, that programs should be service-intensive, i.e. increase the contact of students with supportive people. They argued against the approval of proposals in which funds were overwhelmingly concentrated on the purchase, installation and operation of computerized telephone contact systems unless incorporated into a more comprehensive program, i.e. one which addressed the causes of dropping out. An August 25 letter by the Public Education Association on behalf of several groups to Serrano reads, "In keeping with the special needs of dropout-prone youth for highly personalized, comprehensive programs, we were disheartened to see that a significant number of districts ... never got beyond mere pupil accounting and recordkeeping. A program is more than outreach: it must include services for youngsters once in the school."[10]

The Assemblyman essentially concurred with the advocacy groups, and in a letter to Gordon Ambach, Commissioner of Education, he

stressed that "...the Legislature intended that the attendance plans include measures to employ additional school personnel such as attendance officers, guidance personnel and counselors. The presence of these concerned professionals has proven effective in combatting truancy."[11] Unfortunately, the State Education Department felt there was sufficient ambiguity in the law to permit programs developed by the districts in which resources were overwhelmingly concentrated on machines rather than people.[12]

The final matter about which there was considerable public confusion had to do with the requirement in the Amendments to the Regulations that district plans include a statement describing "... the manner in which the programs and services developed to improve attendance and retention of identified students are coordinated with the programs and services of public and private community agencies and organizations."[13] Interpreting this provision, State Education Department officials said that the statement encouraged but did not require that services be coordinated with agencies external to the school system.[14] The law was less restrictive still in this regard; it simply permitted the use of funds for "... services ... provided by contract with non-school based organizations.[15]

The climate in which the AI/DP bill was passed gave credence to the perception of many advocates that the requirement by the State Education Department that districts describe the manner in which they planned to coordinate programs had a proactive quality, meaning that

districts were to coordinate plans with community based groups. The Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) had indeed collapsed its interest in a specific bill to provide resources to effect such collaboration into the Serrano Bill believing that the school system would be required to fund the program FEGS had designed linking their organization's social service capability to the schools.[16] Serrano himself said in the previously mentioned August 22 letter to Ambach, "...it was my intention that community organizations with a proven record of success in improving student attendance and graduation rates be included in the attendance plans. Support of the surrounding community is essential to improving school attendance and there are very worthy 'lighthouse' community programs that deserve support."[17]

Respecting the Assemblyman's wishes, the Board of Education made an effort to get the districts to comply with his stated intent. A special memoranda was issued emphasizing this point.[18] By and large, however, since the program planning and approval process had already passed, the districts were under no real compulsion to go beyond the lip service they had paid in their proposals to coordination with external agencies. A letter by the advocacy groups to Serrano pointed out just how limited that collaboration was, "By and large the districts simply listed known service providers and said that they would refer youngsters to them. Only the High School Division and Districts One and Ten contracted out services.... "[19]

In all, it seems apparent that on certain key matters, the legislation and the regulations were overly permissive. Directions were suggested but school districts were substantially on their own. Seen in isolation from the encouraging fact that the author of the bill, the city's education advocates, the press and local politicians maintained an active interest in the progress of implementation, this augered ill for the success of the effort.

In addition to the aforementioned positive political climate there were two other factors -- these in the legislation itself -- which were very encouraging. The first was the sheer size of the grant to the city both in absolute terms and relative to the resources other districts within the state had received. New York City garnered a staggering 80% of the resources available for dropout prevention. It was clear to everyone that the city was expected to deliver results. That perception was further strengthened by the elaborate reporting and evaluation requirements contained in the legislation: Districts had to plan and evaluate their own programs, prepare a February progress report to the State Education Department, and submit to monitoring as part of the State Education Department's preparation of a report to the Legislature on the program's impact.

On balance, while there was real confusion among many of the key actors as to the exact shape of the intervention envisioned by the legislators, it was clear that the legislature intended that

demonstrable progress be made in dropout prevention. As the following section will suggest, in different circumstances such permissiveness might not have resulted in the level of acrimony and initial public disappointment with the Board of Education's initiative as occurred in this case.

CHAPTER III

Intergovernmental Communications

While Jose Serrano designed and husbanded the AI/DP Appropriation through the legislature, good ideas are often in the minds of several policy makers simultaneously. In the winter of 1983, Anthony Alvarado, then Schools Chancellor of New York City, met with Jose Serrano to propose a state-sponsored dropout prevention effort. Alvarado impressed the Assemblyman, as he had the city, as a leader committed to effecting change in the school system and capable, if given the resources and support, of delivering on that commitment. The legislation deliberately was written to be very flexible based on the conversations between Jose Serrano and Anthony Alvarado about what would be done. The coincidence of the legislator's plan to develop a dropout program and the new Chancellor's request fueled the legislative initiative.[1]

After the legislation was enacted, Alvarado was forced to resign in the heat of a public scandal over his personal financial dealings. The Central Offices of the Board of Education were in painful disarray as a result of the resignation. Nathan Quinones, the Acting Schools Chancellor, was under the gun to pull together a new administration for the city's schools, win confirmation of his appointment and administer the day to day business of 110 Livingston Street when the state regulations crossed his desk.[2]

The Acting Chancellor approached the task with no previous

relationship to the author of the bill, nor background regarding the informal understandings that had been reached between Serrano and Alvarado and others, and a great deal else to do. What emerged was a Chancellor's Memorandum which essentially pushed the money out to the districts and the divisions without much program guidance.[3] As was mentioned previously, concerned citizens in the city responded with anger and dismay, as so much of their aspirations for doing something about the dropout problem had been pinned on the legislation. They wanted a dramatic response, one which would galvanize educators throughout the city to tackle the problem with renewed enthusiasm and energy.[4]

To complicate matters further, the official timetable for articulating the various intergovernmental responsibilities was too brief to facilitate the gradual amelioration of problems. The appropriation was voted in early April as part of the ordinary state budget process. The State Education Department issued regulations one month later. The Central Offices of the Board of Education followed with a Chancellor's Memorandum to the districts and divisions in May, one month after the regulations were released. The districts and divisions were required to have their plans for dropout prevention at the Board of Education by June, again, a mere month after receiving the directive. The Office of Funded Programs of the Board of Education had one month to review the proposals for compliance and insure their arrival at the State Education Department for final review by August 1st, the State, in the course of events, had one month to review and approve plans and seek modifications in order to enable the districts to launch their initiatives when the schools opened in September.[5]

Bureaucrats were breathless from Albany to New York, and general operating procedures were suspended or modified to facilitate implementation of the law in a timely fashion. The hearing process, for example, which the Commissioner of Education ordinarily undertakes before releasing regulations, was altered because of the special administrative urgency, and only a few key people statewide met with Mr. Ambach to review the state's translation of the legislative language into regulatory language.[6] This, no doubt, played some part in the confusion about the law which ensued.

Given a purposefully permissive piece of legislation, about which key actors had major differences of opinion, and a particularly short period in which to resolve those difficulties, when it came time for State Education officials to review proposals, they were inclined to conduct a thoughtful and complete review to resolve the questions of interpretation which had been nagging so many of the interested parties ...and they did. Consistent with the positions, described in the previous section of this paper, the State Education Department did not rewrite the law, they administered it. The matters about which they were most scrupulous were those clearly specified in the legislation. The prohibition against districts' supplanting funds, for example, was most forcefully and clearly stated in the statute. The most frequent reason for the State Education Department to fail to approve a proposal was the appearance that funds would be used for programs operating the previous year or for persons, especially senior administrators, whose

assignment to a program suggested that funds were being used to fill gaps in the normal operating budget. Their fiscal auditing was indeed intensive enough to call into question other-than-personal costs which appeared to be aggrandizing a district's overall supply closet or, more worrisome, unnecessarily lining the pocket's of subcontractors. This level of specificity, of course, took time, and, as there was no travel budget in the State Education Department to facilitate processing in person, when proposals were unacceptable, program approval and consequently implementation was stalled.[7]

As timing and communication are important issues in implementation, it was an ominous sign that a permissive bill, which needed program specifications, arrived in the City when the school system was too overburdened to respond proactively and with deadlines that required policymakers to act before they could think seriously about the problem.

CHAPTER IV

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF AI/DP

FIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT CASE STUDIES

The permissiveness of the AI/DP legislative and regulatory process left the districts with the responsibility to develop programs as their knowlege, commitment, and capacity allowed. A review of the proposals submitted to the State Education Department suggests that by and large they understood only pieces of what needed to be done. Few could imagine a program (or its implementation) that provided school by school comprehensive services to youngsters at-risk by orchestrating school and community resources -- the idea originally espoused by advocacy groups and later the Board of Education itself.[1]

Most proposals tackled a discrete piece of the problem; some a very small piece. Among the latter are four districts which initially set aside all funds for computerized telephone contact machines and attendance personnel to visit the homes of truant youngsters. While this is an important part of an overall dropout prevention effort, other pieces, such as in-school counselling and incentive programs typically accompany an outreach effort, and have been shown to enhance the overall effectiveness. Another community school district simply used the funds to reduce class size. Again, while a reduction in class size might increase the intrinsic rewards of schooling and thereby im-

prove attendance, it overlooks some traditionally effective components of dropout prevention such as structured attendance follow up, health screening, counselling, social service assistance, and the like.

The most glaring problem in the districts' plans in light of the consensus which developed about what was to be done was the lack of collaboration with community based organizations. Collaboration was valued by the advocacy groups as a way to enhance the comprehensiveness of the services provided to the at-risk student and as a way to deepen ties between the schools and youngsters' families and cultures. Only two community school districts paid community based organizations to provide social service support to their youngsters.

Targeting was another problem. The concern was essentially that resources flow to the schools and youngsters in the greatest jeopardy. In one extreme case, a district directed funds to less needy schools at the expense of a more needy school. The more widespread questionable practice, however, was distributing the funds over all the schools in a district without regard to their relative need. As many as 25% of the districts simply divided the money up among their schools.

The review of the districts' proposals[2] that revealed the foregoing flaws took place at the end of the summer. The review team consisted of representatives of the unions, advocacy organizations, Office of Funded Programs staff, and the Director of the new Office of Student Progress, Rosalyn Oratz. Her presence was valuable both because of the quality of her program judgment and because the Office

of Student Progress ultimately became responsible for monitoring and providing technical assistance to the districts implementing AI/DP and the review experience provided her with a valuable introduction to the issues.

As the review ended, the Chancellor's administration was settling into place. Finally in a position to act affirmatively and aggressively, Board of Education officials intervened with the districts. Simultaneously, they began to address the problems in their own implemention process. The Chancellor established two committees with representatives from advocacy groups to work on issues which had concerned those groups: (1) the funding formula, and (2) the involvement of community based groups in providing services to dropout-prone youngsters.[3]

As the school year opened in September, it looked as if most of the interested parties were seeing the issues similarly. The reality, however, was that the districts did not share the same context as those at the Board of Education and in the advocacy community who had been struggling with the problems for several months. Not all districts were immediately responsive to the Board of Education's new activism.

The five case studies which follow reflect something of the community school districts' diverse consciousness of and responsiveness to the city's evolving vision of what was to be done with the AI/DP monies. The watchwords are comprehensiveness, targeting and collaboration. Districts One's and to some extent Sixteen's plans suggest they saw the importance of comprehensive services,meeting the families' and youngsters' needs for structure and support before the

Board of Education emphasized them. However, District One's plan targeted junior high schools and their feeder elementary schools; while District Sixteen's tended to spread the money broadly. Both viewed collaboration with external agencies as desirable but District One emphasized it by contracting with a social service agency for supportive services. District Ten's plan and District Seven's were quite good but somewhat askew of the Board's developing program emphasis. District Ten's plan, emphasized diverse offerings in multiple sites for a range of youngsters, not comprehen- sive offerings in select sites for especially at risk youngsters. District Seven chose a specific incentive strategy which targeted needy youngsters, but did not provide comprehensive supportive services nor substantially integrate community resources. District Eight's was the furthest from the developing ideal as the strategy was neither targeted, nor collaborative, nor service-intensive. The case studies examine the manner in which the districts translated their plans into programs and the conditions which variously impeded and enhanced their implementation efforts.(Special attention is paid, as so many of these districts serve non-English dominant youngsters, to their capacity to hire bilingual staff.)

A full description of the methods used to select the case study districts appears in the Appendix. As we purposely over-emphasized proactive districts, it is likely our case study selections exceed the typical performance of community school districts citywide.

Community School District #1

PROJECT TEAM: Team Effort For Attendance Modification

Demographic Characteristics

Community School District One, located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, is one of the smallest of the thirty-two decentralized districts. Its boundaries separate this predominantly minority district from the other areas in a way that some feel is a clear case of segregation, though the lines can be traced back to the Twin Bridges demonstration district, one of three experimental decentralization sites established in 1967.

The early history of the district was marked by turbulent and rancorous ethnic politics among two of the three groups which make up a majority of the area residents. The first group, by and large not involved with school politics, includes the young white, often single, and increasingly middle-class artists and writers who have moved into the area, leading to complaints of "gentrification." The second group is made up of predominantly elderly Orthodox Jewish residents who have lived in the area for several generations. Many played a part in the early days of the American labor movement. The Jewish population was a powerful force in school politics during decentralization, taking the side of labor against the Hispanic representatives on the school board. The Hispanics, both poor and middle class, generally send their children

to the public schools, and saw the Jewish population as at best unsympathetic, to the needs of their children.

Though Black students make up 13% of the school population, Black parents have not played a strong role in school politics in District One. There are an increasing number of Asian students - now 8.6% of the school population - although most of the Asian population resides in the neighboring district, in which nearly one-third of the students are Asian. The Asian population in the district, however, is expected to increase as new housing is constructed, giving rise to concern about attracting and keeping these new students in the District, rather than in District Two. The district has always had the lowest student enrollment among the districts - 18,411 in 1970 and 10,897 in 1981 (a 43% decline, compared to a 27% decline citywide during the same period).[1] Many of the city's "hotel children" are now among the students now served by the district.

In 1977, the current Superintendent, Bernard Mecklowitz, who had been a junior high school principal in the district, took office and the district's warring factions moved toward peaceful coexistence. In addition, the community school board has become more balanced since the 1980 election, with its primary concern now the much needed improvement of the district's schools, which have some of the most severe problems in the city.

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1. Source: 1981-82 School Profiles.

The Current Administration

Unlike his predecessors, Bernard Mecklowitz is a mediator and a peacemaker. Since 1977, he has worked to unify the school district, and with the support and encouragement of the community school board, has worked to turn around the district's ailing schools. His leadership style is collaborative; he is not threatened by the sharing of power and although he is a peacemaker, he can be blunt and demanding when the situation requires it. He is actively interested in involving all groups at all levels in decisions about the schools so that a shared sense of commitment and ownership can be developed. Finally, he is a planner, and especially so in recent years with the assistance of a school-based planning project initiated and funded by the Community Service Society, that has now been integrated into the district administration. This means that he and his staff have a comprehensive understanding of the complex and interrelated problems in the district, and plan programs accordingly.

Many of Mecklowitz's District Office staff have been with him since he was appointed, and although they represent differing perspectives on the problems in the schools, they share with him the commitment to school improvement through comprehensive planned change. Those who were central to the planning of the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention program were Francine Goldstein, the Director of Funded Programs and Curriculum Director for the District; Berle Driscoll, the Director of Research and Evaluation, and Joan Gutkin, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and the Project Coordinator of PROJECT TEAM. This small group is knowledgeable about the local schools on both an institutional and personal level, and use

this knowledge to help each school move forward in the most suitable way.

District One's Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program

Background

The AI/DP program adopted by Community School District One is the product of two converging streams: past attendance improvement efforts and collaboration with the Grand Street Settlement House on meeting the needs of the area's children.

Serious attendance problems had clearly plagued schools in the district for years. Prior to AI/DP, the district's resources for coping with these problems consisted of the attendance coordinator and two attendance teachers, who were charged with tracing and retrieving the students referred to them by the schools after a minimum of 5 consecutive days of absence. With an 86% attendance rate, as the Attendance Coordinator explained, there are nearly 1400 daily absences, of which at least 10% are truancies, an onerous responsibility for a small staff. In addition to these baseline attendance services, Junior High School 60, with the worst problems in the district, had already been the site of a special Holding Power Program funded by the Bureau of Guidance in 1983-84.

The Grand Street Settlement House, after generations of working parallel to the schools, had initiated a collaborative relationship with the district in 1980 through the creation of two afterschool programs in the neighborhood. These programs, run on school property, provided the

opportunity for Grand Street staff to develop relationships with the principals and Superintendent, and to establish their credibility as a service provider.

In 1982, Grand Academy, a special program for "double holdover" students from the Promotional Gates program, was opened. Students who had chronically failed in their schoolwork were moved out of the failure environment - the schools - to the settlement house, where the school teachers came to work with them. The settlement house provided the necessary supportive services for these students, paid in a subcontract with District One and the Board of Education.

Both Larry Mandell, the Director of the Settlement House, and Bernard Mecklowitz heard about the Serrano legislation fairly early in its development, and discussed the idea of collaborating should any funds be forthcoming. This early knowledge, combined with the smooth functioning of Mecklowitz's District Office team in planning and developing proposals produced an early submission, as well as an early approval by the State Education Department. In addition, the experience of Junior High School 60's Holding Power project, which was successful in getting students back to school, but lacked the ability to adequately deal with the noneducational needs that often caused the attendance problems, made it clear that outside supportive services were indispensable.

Specific Program Features

. General Identification Of Students With Attendance Problems

To identify students who are at risk in grades K through 9, the District is developing and testing procedures that can be used to show

which students have a high potential for truancy and academic failure. The criteria include erratic and excessive attendance history; academic failure or a measurable decline in academic achievement over a period of two years; eligibility for Chapter I/PSEN remedial services; adjustment, behavioral or personal problems, language difficulties or Limited English Proficiency. Students who meet one or more of the criteria will be screened more intensively to determine the need for intervention either through PROJECT TEAM or other school programs and services.

. Identification of 8th Grade students "At-Risk"

In September, the records of students entering ninth grade were reviewed to identify those with a high potential for truancy and dropping out. (In future years, this process will occur in June, at the completion of the eighth grade.) The criteria used include:

- Erratic and excessive attendance history AND
- Academic Failure
  * Low Achievement in Reading
  * Course Failure
  * Over Age
  * Limited English Proficiency, OR
- Adjustment, Behavioral or Personal Problems, OR
- Language Difficulties

. Services Provided to the "At-Risk" Student

The services provided to students identified by these procedures are carefully targeted to the three junior high schools with the greatest needs, and to the six elementary schools that are their

feeder network. At the elementary level, a junior high school neighborhood worker counsels with students identified as "at-risk" one day a week (spending the remaining 4 days working with students at the junior high school which these students will eventually attend), conducting outreach, retrieval and parent engagement activities under the direction of the building attendance coordinator. Additional outreach services are provided every sixth day by a DC 37 paraprofessional family associate.

At the junior high school level, the School Attendance Coordinator and the Community Mental Health Worker (provided by Grand Street Settlement House) work with the Early Morning Engagement Teacher and the Junior School Neighborhood Workers to bring the targeted students into school and to address their problems. In addition, a psychologist (also provided by Grand Street) works in each targeted junior high school one day week, meeting with students with special problems. These services are additionally targeted according to the severity of the attendance problems; Junior High School 60 receives more concentrated services (a full-time versus a half-time Community Mental Health Worker).

.Collaboration With Community Based Organizations

The collaboration with the Grand Street Settlement House is a key component of the junior high school level services to students targeted in the identification procedures. Grand Street provides a range of services on its own and its Community Mental Health Workers are linked to a broad network of supportive services and agencies around the city. This greatly increases their ability to deal with the kinds of

problems that are often at the root of absenteeism and truancy.

The Grand Academy experience provided both the structure of the collaborative relationship and the substance of the approach to truancy that are the basis of the TEAM Project. Larry Mandell, Director of the Grand Street Settlement House, lists three factors as critical in the collaboration:

1. The schools pay Grand Street Settlement House for its services, and thus have a vested interest in making the collaboration work. Grand Street is paid through a block transfer of funds, and hires and pays the staff members for the project.
2. There is a commitment from the highest level to the lowest to making the team concept work. Collaboration itself is a shared value.
3. There are structures and procedures created to support the collaboration. The two individuals responsible for running the Academy share the same office and have greater opportunity to work together and resolve differences than were they in separate offices or locations. Release time is granted for regular staff planning sessions and case conferences. The Grand Street staff and the District One teachers meet regularly in teams to review the progress of their students.

The AIDP Program at Junior High School 60

In recent years, Junior High School 60 has suffered from the worst attendance problems in Community School District One, with an average attendance rate hovering just below 80%, and dropping some months as low as 77%. The school had also been plagued with administrative problems, which were alleviated in 1983 with the appointment of a new principal.

In 1983-84, the school was the site of a Holding Power Project funded by the Bureau of Guidance. This program provided:

- An Early Morning Engagement Teacher to work with the students in the hour before classes began. The teacher, who often ate breakfast with the students, also provided tutorial work and some basic counseling services, and, if needed, telephoned students with a history of oversleeping. Students were referred to this early session by the school's guidance counselor and attendance coordinator when a pattern of lateness or absenteeism was evident.
- Four Junior Neighborhood Workers, who were community based young people, worked in pairs making home visits and helped the students return to school in whatever ways they could.
- A TELSOL machine which telephoned parents with a recorded message to notify them that their child had been absent from school.

According to the principal, this program worked relatively well in getting students back to school, but once they had been "retrieved," the school was limited in its capacity to deal with the students' non-academic problems. The Guidance Counselor not only worked with these students but also had to deal with any other guidance problems in the school, as well as processing the high school applications of all the ninth grade students.

In 1984-85, the funds for the Holding Power program were terminated, but the AI/DP funds enabled the school to expand the original model. In the transition, the school both gained and lost staff. PROJECT TEAM provides only two Junior Neighborhood Workers (instead of the four under the Holding Power program) to make home visits, and this team works only four days in the junior high school, spending the remaining day in one of the feeder elementary schools.

By far the most important addition to Junior High School 60's attendance efforts is a Grand Street Settlement House employee. Aixa Beauchamps, a bilingual Community Social Worker who works with the school on a full-time basis. Principal Henry Staiman describes her "in one word - terrific." She calls students' homes, beginning at 9:30, when the school Attendance Coordinator gives her the daily attendance record, makes home visits when needed, and conducts individual and group counseling sessions. These sessions are held at lunch hour so as not to interrupt classes, or to allow students to leave the building and not come back, a major problem with this group of students. She is also responsible for the coordination of Junior Neighborhood Workers. She

targeted students, and sees that these students receive needed support services through her access to a broad network of services.

The project also provides a psychologist (on the staff of the Grand Street Settlement House), who works in the school one day each week, meeting with students with special needs referred by the Community Mental Health Worker. Joan Gutkin, the District's Project Coordinator, also meets regularly with the entire group of school and settlement house project staff to review progress and plan activities.

So far (this interview was conducted after the project had been in operation for only a few months), the attendance rate at the school has improved substantially, with the monthly attendance rate ranging between 82 and 84%. (Previous rates averaged about 80%). In addition, Ms. Beauchamps has had some marked success with students with chronic problems that were beyond the reach of the school even under the Holding Power program. The school Attendance Coordinator (who also is a mathematics teacher) described a boy who last year (1983-84) was a chronic truant, and a severe discipline problem the few times he did attend school. His mother had so exhausted her ability to deal with him that she reportedly told the school she would leave the country if they suspended him and sent him home. This year the student comes regularly, even though he is sometimes late, and he has calmed down a great deal in school. He and his mother still do not get along, he "dabbles" in drugs (probably nothing stronger than marijuana, according to the Attendance Coordinator) and his academic performance still leaves a great deal to be desired. But he is making steady progress.

If anything, the fear of the principal and Attendance Coordinator of Junior High School 60 is that there will be insufficient follow up when these students leave the district and enter the high schools. As the principal puts it, "These kids have already suffered a lot and have shown a pattern that is very difficult to reverse." If the services at the high school level do not continue the work that has been begun at the junior high school, it is still doubtful that these students will complete high school.

Comments on the Progress

Community School District One launched a complete and appropriate program in an effective and timely manner. Several factors seem to have played a role in that success. The first is the strong planning capability of the district. The Superintendent is supported by a competent and loyal staff with a lengthy experience in program development who function expertly as a team. Second, the planning team feeds directly into the implementation process. Joan Gutkin, a member of the planning team, was also the project manager. Third, the experience of the district in running and evaluating an attendance improvement program the prior year established a ready reference point for program ideas. Fourth, the district is familiar with the many quality social service providers in the neighborhood. This enabled it to locate excellent support staff, when other districts wasted weeks and months attempting to hire guidance counselors from the Board of Education's personnel lists when precious few were actually available.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, is the commitment of the superintendent and staff to the highest standards of service to youngsters.

The collaboration between Grand Street and the district, while a natural in terms of the needs of the district and the strength of the Settlement House, was very difficult to effect organizationally. Although the district had approval of their proposal in late August, it was late December before the central offices of the Board of Education approved the contract for the participation of Grand Street. To get the program operational in September, Grand Street had to pay staff from their own meager resources. This was matched by the commitment of the District Superintendent to walk the proposal through the Board's contract approval process. While such an onerous process provided a clear example of the special commitment of Mecklowitz and Mandell, it also insures that few will follow in their footsteps.

Community School District #7

PAIR - Program for Attendance Improvement

and Retention

Demographic Characteristics

Community School District 7 is located in the South Bronx, an area widely known for its depressed economic conditions. Approximately one-third of the student population is Black, while the other two-thirds are almost entirely Hispanic - predominantly Puerto Ricans. All the schools in the district qualify as Title I schools, and three-quarters of the district's students are eligible for the Free Lunch Program. Despite these serious economic problems, the attendance rate for the district hovers just below the city-wide average. The reputation of the area as a high-crime neighborhood sometimes has made it difficult for the school district to attract staff, although those who do come to work in the district tend to stay.

The district is a quiet one, without a great deal of political maneuvering among the various groups. It also works quietly, sometimes running excellent programs that get very little publicity compared to programs in other districts.

The Current Administration

The current Community School Superintendent, Mrs. Carmen Rodriquez, has been in office for 12 years, enjoying the continued support of the Community School Board. The Community School Board is an activist one that is representative of the community, and more stable in its membership than most school boards. One current member has been

on the Board since 1970; and the school board President has been on the board almost as long.

There has been measurable academic progress in the district over the last decade and a half. Fifteen years ago only 15% of the district's students were reading at or above grade level on the citywide examinations; this year 39% of the students are reading at or above grade level. This improvement is the result of a steady process of growth, with the only real setback coming in 1975-76 with the impact of the New York City fiscal crisis.

District 7's Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program

Background

Despite the very short time between the announcement of the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program and the deadline for submitting proposals, the district's Director of Funded Programs, Nilda Torresela, called together an ad hoc committee of principals and attendance and guidance staff from the district's schools to plan the program. The committee decided that the funds should be targeted to those schools with the worst attendance records, although they felt it was important to work both at the elementary and at the intermediate/junior high school level.

After Nilda Torresola had identified the three intermediate/junior high schools and three elementary schools with the most difficult attendance problems, the principals of these six schools were called together with District Office staff to develop the district's model. (A seventh school - an elementary school - was added

later, when it became clear that the funds were sufficient to include it). Arthur Rifkin, director of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Program, suggested the Project Turnaround model that had been successfully implemented in District 18 as an approach to remotivating disaffected students, and replicated in District 7 from 1980-82. Although the initial reaction to the model was not unanimously enthusiastic, Project Turnaround was chosen as the district's model, with some modifications specific to attendance problems and implemented in all seven schools.

Specific Program Features

. General Identification of Students with Attendance Problems and Identification of 8th Grade Students "At-Risk"

The district employs the same basic procedure for identifying students with severe attendance problems at all grade levels. A committee within the District Office developed a screening and identification form, then met with the participating principals, who approved it. The principals then took the form back to their schools and met with their pupil personnel staffs to begin the process of identifying the target population. In addition, those students in the Eighth Grade Extension Program (the Promotional Gates Extension), were automatically designated as "high-risk."

The process of identifying students was tied to selecting which students would participate in the Turnaround Programs, and thus the criteria developed by the district tended to filter the population of students with potential problems to arrive at a population with

problems serious enough to warrant this active intervention, yet not so far gone in their truancy that the funds would be likely to have little, if any, effect.

Services for the "at-risk" Student

The basic premise of the PAIR program, an adaptation of Project Turnaround, is that,

> Given the proper attention, potential drop-outs will "turn around" and make a firmer commitment to stay in school. The project does not interrupt the normal process of the school day, as it provides services that occur before and after school hours through formal group counseling exercises aimed at encouraging appropriate social behaviors and the discussion of personal and/or school related problems.(1)

These activities are reinforced by an after-school "incentive" program several afternoons each week, in which students have access to a range of recreational and extracurricular activities. Only those students present during the school day may participate in the after-school program, and some special events are limited to students with excellent attendance records.

One computerized telephone machine was ordered for the project. It is to be located in the office of the project coordinator, and the participating schools will contact that office daily to have their calls programmed onto the machine. As in other districts, the contract problems at the Central Board of Education have delayed the implementation of this program element. In addition, family assistants

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1 Community School District 7, Application for AIDP funds, page 2.

were to be hired to do outreach work with the parents of the target students. The district has met with hiring difficulties, however, and as of this writing only three of the eight family assistants originally planned have been hired due to delays at the State level in reviewing the finger prints of these and other perspective Board of Education employees. Both implementation problems have hurt the program seriously, rendering those students in homes without telephones very difficult to reach. As a result, there is a marked difference between the programs's success with students in homes with telephones and those without.

Collaboration with Community Based Organizations

The PAIR Program does not require institutional collaboration with any of the many community based agencies within the district. At the same time, many of the participating schools already have ongoing agency projects in their schools which are part of the referral and support network available to students with problems. The family assistants, in particular, are the linkage to these agencies, and part of the training and orientation for the family assistants involves familiarizing them with all the agency resources available in each participating school. The district, in fact, has a resource book to facilitate this process.

The PAIR Program at Intermediate School 151

Intermediate School 151 is a modern building with a fortress-like appearance. While most of the school becomes quiet and almost empty at 3:00 p.m. there is bustling hub of activity around the

gymnasium on the first floor. In the gym, and in classrooms on the adjoining hallways, approximately 60 students are participating in a variety of after school activities: sports, arts and crafts, computer games and studies, dance, video and photography. Their spirits are high and there is a strong feeling of camaraderie. Some students are working and playing in small groups; others are talking individually to one of the adults in the area.

This lively after-school scene is the incentive program for IS 151's PAIR Program. It is supervised by a teacher-team leader and four teacher-advocates, all of whom are paid to arrive early and stay after the regular school day. The positions are desirable ones, and the teacher-advocates (2 men and 2 women) were chosen carefully on the basis of their patience, interest, creativity, enthusiasm, and demonstrated ability to develop personal rapport with individual students. (One more senior staff member who was not given the position has initiated a grievance because he/she was passed over, but the principal has remained firm in his choices.)

At 7:30 a.m., the first teacher-advocates arrive at school. They spend the first half-hour of their time incorporating the previous day's attendance records into their group files (each teacher-advocate is administratively responsible for 15 students), checking for emerging patterns of lateness and absenteeism. They also make early morning phone calls as needed to bring chronic late arrrivers to school on time.

At 8:00 a.m. some of the students arrive (participation in the early morning session is voluntary) for breakfast, tutorial assistance, formal rap sessions. This session helps the student make a smoother transition into the school setting, that he or she often has come to see as a negative, failure ridden experience, in a more positive way. In addition, the teacher-advocates can spot some behavioral problems in the making and head off problems before they begin.

During the school day, each of the target students carries a behavior report that individual teachers initial to show that student arrived at class on time. A continued pattern of excellence on these daily punctuality reports is rewarded at the end of the month with award certificates as is excellent daily attendance. At first, students objected to carrying the reports with them, but many now ask for the new sheets each week. Daily attendance and punctuality have been broken into discrete and controllable units of demand that the student can fulfill one at a time, and the continuation of a positive pattern of attendance and punctuality is made clearly visible and rewardable by these reports. Over time, according to the principal of IS 151, Mr. Sargent, the behavior reports enable the students to see themselves from a different perspective.

The incentive program occurs after school, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. On the day of our site visit, the afternoon session began with the monthly awards ceremony. Students received certificates for reaching a certain level of attendance and punctuality, i.e. attending school 18 days in a month with 21 school days. In addition,

the program gives a $5 McDonald's gift certificate to winners of the "McDonald's Hall of Fame." This award initially was given to the top five students in the program in terms of attendance records. In October, five students received the award, but in November, nine students had perfect attendance, and nine awards were given. In December, eight students had perfect attendance, and in January, traditionally a difficult month for attendance problems, nine students again won a McDonald's gift certificate. The names of the "Hall of Fame" winners are entered on posters above the entrance to the gymnasium, and the awards ceremony is videotaped so that students can watch themselves receiving their awards only a few minutes later.

In addition to the regular daily activities, a movie is shown once a week, chosen from a list generated by the students. There are also occasional trips - one is now planned to a skating rink - but these activities are open only to those students who have made significant progress in attending school regularly.

The impact of the program has been immediate and visible. Ironically, some students not included in the program have inquired as to what they had to do to become a member of "the club." The lead teacher described several students' cases; one in particular stands out. One boy who is in the Eighth Grade Gates Extension Program had an attendance record last year that included more than 150 days of absenteeism. This year he has been one of the consistent award winners, with perfect attendance in the last month, and he will graduate from the eighth grade in June.

Comments on the Process

The turnaround model used in Community School District 7 seems to be an exceptionally effective approach to bring students with attendance and attendance related problems back into school. The approach is based on constant positive reinforcement and the work of caring and giving staff members. There may be a problem in the long-run when a student's success results in his or her exclusion from the program in the future, especially because the program seems to constitute the sum total of the district's attendance improvement efforts, with little linkage to other programs and/or services. It will be interesting to follow these students to check whether the remotivation can last without the intensive reinforcement offered by the PAIR Program.

In addition, the program has been hurt by the problems with the TELSOL/RIKA contract and the lack of family assistants to make home visits. These problems are particularly visible when checking the teacher-advocates' group files; those students with clusters of red a's for absences are the same students who do not have telephones in their homes, and are reachable only by letter or personal visits. For the most part, however, the decision of the district to staff the program with hourly employees - those already working in the district - has eased the implementation problems faced by other districts.

In all implementation in District 7 seems to have proceeded well. Many of the factors that contributed to the success of this program were identified in District One's program assessment. The

planning process, despite the short time available, was a thoughtful one, and one of the planners was given the task of managing the program. The experience of others was sought and used in the program development process -- District One's program was a follow-up to an approach they had developed the previous year; District Seven's was a careful replication of a District Eighteen program which they had admired. Another similarity between the districts is their ability to forsee common implementation problems and plan accordingly. In the case of District One, the difficulties associated with contracting out services to the Grand Street Settlement House were met with a flexible approach to start-up funding. In District Seven, prior experience with the lengthy process of hiring new project staff led planners to choose the use of hourly employees - current teachers, already familiar with the students who were willing to work additional hours.

Community School District #8

Attendance Improvement and Dropout

Prevention Program

Demographic Characteristics

Community School District 8 is an ethnically and economically varied district in the southern and eastern Bronx. The student population is 35.3% Black, 52.9% Hispanic, and 11.2% White, with the remaining less than 1% made up of Asian students. Although more than 80% of the students qualify for the Free Lunch Program, not all of the district's schools qualify as Title I schools. These figures reflect the peculiarity of the district, which is divided into five subsections; two extremely depressed poverty areas (one predominantly Hispanic, the other predominantly Black), a transitional but changing central area, and two fairly stable white areas in the northern part of the district that include within them some low-income housing projects.

The Current Administration

The diversity of the district is also reflected in local school politics.[1] The community school board has been the scene of increasingly bitter factional disputes as the different local interests

1 The following discussion of district politics is based on the case study of this district in David Rogers and Norman H. Chung's 110 Livingston Street Revisited, New York: New York University Press, 1983, pp. 68-86.

face off in the educational arena. As a result, the board has not focused its attention on pedagogical concerns, and has encouraged, albeit not necessarily deliberately, a similar kind of political factionalism within the district's administration. The outcome of this internal turmoil is that the schools have been left to run themselves without effective leadership from the district level. In some cases, this laissez-faire situation has provided the opportunity for some school-based innovations, but for the most part, it has contributed to the difficulties of the district.

Max Messer has been the Superintendent of District 8 since 1976. His two predecessors had resigned, and the Community School Board refused to give Messer, who had been a deputy to the last superintendent, a long term contract. Instead, he spent his first several years as an Acting Superintendent, and has been given one-year contracts since then. According to Rogers and Chung,

> He and his staff estimate that up to two thirds of his time is spent in struggles with a faction on his board over who has what authority. As the board refuses to and/or is unable to set policy on critical matters like budget, staffing, curriculum priorities, and building use, the superintendent sometimes does so on his own, informing the board after making his decisions. The board then accuses him of usurping its authority, questions the efficacy of his decisions, and then fails to generate enough consensus among its members to formulate positions itself.(1)

1 Rogers and Chung, p.75

District 8's Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention Program

Prior to the AI/DP Program, Community School District 8 had only one attendance teacher, who was assisted by a part-time school aide. Over the years, occasional reimbursable programs that have provided some additional services in the form of family assistants and aide hours to help address attendance problems in some of the district's 26 schools.

When the District received the guidelines for preparation of the AI/DP applications from the Board of Education, the Parent Advisory Council, which is an active participant in the district's affairs, was consulted for their suggestions on how to allocate the funds within the district. Based on the recommendations of the Council, and the District's Attendance Teacher, Marcia Knight, it was decided that the intermediate and junior high schools in the district should receive more concentrated services than the elementary level, but that the attendance problems should be addressed at all levels.

The critical program decision, however, was made by the Superintendent, who decided that every school in the district should have a computerized telephone machine for contacting parents (TELSOL/RIKA). He based this decision on the positive experience in the prior school year with a Central Board of Education project in two junior high schools, both of which had received TELSOL equipment as part of their programs. His decision was supported by others in the district office, despite the expense entailed in this approach. The

remaining funds in the district's allocation were then divided up among family assistants and school aides to be assigned to each school to carry out and reinforce the parent contacts made through the machines.

General Identification of Students with Attendance Problems

In accordance with the standards recommended in the Chancellor's guidelines, the district office, in discussions with the Parent Advisory Council developed a set of criteria for the identification of students considered to be "at-risk" of becoming truants or dropouts. These criteria included:

- Truancy - 25 or more days absent in the 1983-84 school year AND
- Low achievement in reading OR
- Course failures in 3 or more major subjects OR
- Over age by 2 or more years for the grade OR
- Limited English Proficiency

Official classroom teachers were required to review their students' files to develop lists of the target students, using the criteria listed above. In addition, an individual AI/DP profile form was developed in the district office, and teachers were asked to maintain a regular check on the progress of the target students by filling out these profiles on a daily basis.

Identification of 8th Grade Students "At-Risk"

The criteria for the identification of 8th grade students considered to be at-risk included:

- An erratic and excessive attendance history - 25 or

more days absent in each of the last two years, or an overall poor attendance record throughout their school history.

- A record of academic failure - a decline in achievement over a period of years, and/or consistent failure of 2 or more subject classes during each of 2 consecutive school years, or a reading level below 7.2.
- Adjustment, behavioral and personal problems.
- Language difficulties.

The procedures for implementing these criteria were the same as described under general identification procedures for all grades.

Services Provided to the "At-Risk" Student

The implementation of the services to "at-risk" students in District 8 was beset by more problems than any other district surveyed herein. The program was based on the improvement of the outreach capacity of the district's schools, once they had received their TELSOL/RIKA equipment and additional staff to make home visits to follow up the telephone calls. This program design left the district uniquely vulnerable. While other districts experienced occasional difficulties with hiring and equipment, District 8's program was virtually paralyzed by the contact problems at the Board of Education in securing the computerized telephone contact equipment and the District's own inability to bring on board the full complement of family assistants and school aides to make contact with parents.

By February, 1985, only two of the six family assistants required by the district's plan had been processed by the Board of Education, and there was some indication that two of the remaining four candidates might not be approved at any time. All the school aides finally had been hired, but only after a lengthy delay. Only the two schools that received TELSOL machines last year could carry out efforts to contact parents, and the latest report was that the long overdue RIKA machine had some difficulties which needed to be corrected before they would be delivered to the district.

The identification procedures had been implemented as planned, but the district had encountered teacher resistance to maintaining the daily profiles on the at-risk students because of the amount of paperwork involved. Some principals had worked with their school attendance staffs to plan workshops for the parents of the "at-risk" students, and in some cases, these workshops had been well attended and useful in raising the consciousness of parents about the importance of school attendance.

Given these problems of implementation, there was a sizeable amount of funds left in the AI/DP budget. Shortly after our visit to District 8, the district decided to use these funds to run an incentive program in each of the district's nine junior high schools. These programs similar to the Turnaround model in District Seven, use a variety of after-school activities to attract students and to reward them for improving their attendance. The staff in each school include a "teacher ombudsman" to coordinate the program and two other teachers

who provide tutorial assistance. Each program serves 40 students and, based on anecdotal data, the attendance of the participating student has improved dramatically.

In addition, the calling machines are now in place along with the family assistants to make follow up visits to the parents of students with attendance problems.

Collaboration With Community Based Organizations

The program design for District Eight's Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention Plan did not require institutional collaboration with any of the numerous community agencies within the district. The catchment areas of the agencies overlap and differ in a patchwork that makes a coherent plan of collaboration difficult to create. The district has worked, however, on a school-by-school basis with several agencies. One in particular, the Longwood Coordinating Council, has established a committee on truancy and works with two schools in the district on a voluntary basis, meeting monthly to go over the "at-risk" cases with the school, and providing support services where necessary.

Comments on the Process

At the time of the this interview, implementation of the program in District Eight was at a virtual standstill. This is particularly striking since on the face of it, few programs in the city seemed of comparable simplicity. Indeed, advocates outside the district had argued from the outset that the design was not just simple, but weak because program dollars were spread all over the district and didn't allow for the targeting of a special group of

youngsters for concerted services.

In addition, the original design failed to increase the contact between troubled students and supportive adults, a key element identified in the research on successful approaches to combatting truancy and preventing dropouts. That the district was unable to receive the automatic telephone contact equipment, of course, had nothing to do with their program design or implementation efforts. Unknown to the district, the Board of Education's contract with TELSOL had run out and a great deal of time was necessary for the bidding process to be engaged and a new contract processed. It can be argued, however, that the slimness of the original design was the the result of a problem in the program development phase. The program was not designed by a team of educators as in the two districts described earlier. The Superintendent first went to the Parent Advisory Council, which, understandably focused on distributional questions, such as which schools should get the money, rather than programmatic questions such as what should be done in those schools. (In the best of all circumstances the parents would have been asked to participate with staff or respond to a design suggested by staff.) Given the distributional framework suggested by the Parent Advisory Council, the superintendent designed the program largely by himself.

Happily, by the end of the school year, District Eight's program had improved substantially. Forced by the lack of equipment to find an alternate approach, District Eight chose a successful model that emphasized personal contact and positive support and replicated it in each junior high school.

Community School District #10

Project RAP

Reach Out And Prevent

Demographic Characteristics

Community School District #10 is a large and very varied district that has grown substantially since the inception of decentralization in 1970. There are approximately 33,000 students, more than in any other district, and many of these are recent immigrants. By one estimate, there are as many as sixty-seven different native languages spoken in the district. The population is 25.4% Black, 4.0% Asian, 55.3% Hispanic and 15.3% White; 24 of the district's 29 schools qualify as Title I schools, although only a few did in 1970.

Seventy-six percent of the students are eligible for the Free Lunch Program, and the students' scores on the citywide reading and mathematics test reflect the problems that rapid growth and extreme diversity can bring to schools.

Two factors explain the rapid growth of the district, as well as the concentration of immigrants. First, many families have moved into the district from the South Bronx as the housing there deteriorated; the schools in the southern and eastern end of the district are severely overcrowded as a result of this immigration. One junior high school, for example, has 1800 students, and another elementary school holds four first grade classes in what used to be the school's gymnasium. Second, immigrant relief and assistance agencies have

placed recent immigrants in housing in the district, the housing is both reasonably priced and in relatively good condition. These immigrants then attract others by word-of-mouth.

The district is mobile as well as overpopulated. Families not only move <u>into</u> the district, they move <u>around</u> it in search of better housing in the northern areas. The effects on the schools are dramatic; in one recent year, the schools had to process and accommodate nearly 7,000 new admissions to the district, and the average level of admissions is 5,000 per year.[1] This mobility also occurs within the classroom, so a single teacher may end the year with the same number of students, but have only half of the children who began the year in that class. Clearly, this places an extra responsibility on the school to keep good records that can accompany the child from school to school, and on teachers to work with each student as an individual.

It goes without saying that the multilingualism of the students poses a serious challenge to the district. For those students from South and Central America, the bilingual classes that are already available are helpful. Still, there is tremendous diversity among the backgrounds of the different Hispanic and Latin American students. For

[1] This does not mean that there were 7,000 new students on the district's rollbooks. Instead, it means that 7,000 times, a student entered one school from another - in or out of the district - and had to be processed and integrated into the life of a new school setting.

those children who do not speak Spanish, the district provides classes in English as a Second Language. Again, the problem of diversity among immigrant students' backgrounds is a difficult one. Some students come with a solid education in their native language and simply need to make a smooth transition into English, while others, like the immigrants from the Cambodian detention camps, have had no formal education at all.

In stark contrast to the mobilty of the student population, the personnel in the district have, for the most part, worked in the district since before decentralization. Although only recently appointed, the Superintendent has been in the district since 1972, and many of his closest staff have been there as long or longer. The same is true of teachers and principals. This stability has worked to the advantage of the district in allowing for long-term planning and staff development activities. The only disadvantage has been the vulnerability of the district to complaints, both official and unofficial, of a lack of ethnic diversity among the staff.

While the population in the district's schools has grown and changed, the teachers and administrators have worked hard to maintain a consistent quality of education. Many creative and innovative programs have been developed, and some of the most successful have been absorbed into tax-levy programs and regular practices.

The Current Administration

The current Superintendent, Dr. Fred Goldberg, has been a key figure in the effort to maintain a consistently high level of

educational quality in the schools. He has worked with the teaching and administrative staff to help them adapt to the new needs of the incoming pupils, stressing that the district cannot expect any less of the new students just because they are different from the earlier ones. He has set a tone in the district supportive of teachers and administrators trying new approaches to both old and new problems. One of the more widely-known innovations of the district is a network of alternative programs, most of them within existing schools, that provide special approaches to meet the needs of students experiencing the kinds of difficulties that often foreshadow dropping out.

District 10's Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program

The time available to plan how to use the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention funds was very short -- only three weeks -- and the near million dollars allocated to District 10 was, according to the Director of Funded Programs, Vivian Salit, "astronomical, at least relatively speaking." Even during this brief time period, however, there was a great deal of "back and forth" conversation between the District Office and the principals, guidance staff and teachers who would be implementing the programs.

One of the key concerns, according to the Director of Funded Programs and Director of Pupil Personnel Services Joyce Benjamin, was how to improve what the district was already doing to combat attendance problems, but also be "new" enough to respond to the clear constraints of the legislation that the money not be used to supplant the funding

for current programs. In general, the district had a strong on-going attendance program, having retained their attendance teachers, even at the elementary level, while other districts had eliminated them in times of severe financial shortages. As a result, rather than targeting the aid to the schools with the most severe problems, District 10's Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program emphasized a general improvement and expansion of the attendance plan and existing programs, although some projects were added in individual schools. In one instance, for example, the funds provided an attendance teacher and a paraprofessional to pilot an in-school suspension program in two of the district's schools.

General Identification of Students With Attendance Problems

A district wide committee of all the principals, guidance counselors and attendance teachers, as well as parent and student representatives met with the district office staff before the schools opened to determine which variables would be checked in the identification process. The purpose of the identification process was to target individual students who needed additional services. The committee also decided that a comprehensive approach to the problem required looking at family patterns, checking potential problems among the younger siblings of targeted students, and trying to prevent attendance problems from developing. As nearly one million dollars was available, all schools received funds for services, but services were targeted for individuals in need within schools.

Identification of 8th Grade Students "At-Risk"

The process for identifying those eighth graders whose attendance problems, coupled with other difficulties, suggested they were at risk of becoming truants or dropouts, differed little from the identification process for at-risk students in the other grades. Once the student had been identified, the attendance and official classroom teachers conferred to determine each student's specific needs for assistance, and provided appropriate services to the student.

Services Provided to the "At-Risk" Student

The plan District 10 has implemented focuses on attendance improvement rather than dropout prevention per se. The services provided by the district to students experiencing difficulties in their education (which are often manifested in absenteeism and truancy) are extensive and varied. In some cases, successful existing alternative programs are augumented so they can directly address the attendance problems of their participants. One such case is Video Ink, where students from four middle schools work in a structured video production curriculum one day each week, in collaboration with the school district, the community school board, the New York Botanical Garden, the Bronx County Historical Society and other institutions within the school district. Under AI/DP, an additional teacher and paraprofessional are assigned to each of the four feeder elementary schools to monitor the attendance and academic performance of the students in the program, and to follow up problems as necessary.

In other cases, the services provided under the AI/DP funds

are first time innovations, such as the in-school suspension programs in two schools, which allow students who have been separated from the student body because of serious infractions in school discipline to be intensively counseled during the period of separation, rather than separated from the setting altogether.

Some services are replications of successful programs, such as the Work-Study training project with Fordham University, which is based on a previous program with North Bronx Central Hospital and the offsite Promotional Gates Program at Bronx Community College. In this program, students with a strong potential for academic achievement who have exhibited problems of adjustment in school and chronic truancy are released from school to spend every afternoon on the Fordham University Campus. There they are trained to work at various assignments, and also receive tutorial and other academic support. It is hoped that these students, when they enter high school, will become part of the "Upward Bound" program and prepare to enter college. This program is coordinated by an experienced school psychologist on the staff of Fordham University.

Underlying these specific services is the strengthening of the district's attendance and guidance services in all schools. Although only one attendance teacher and three guidance counselors have been added to the staff, they enable the total group to work on a school-specific basis, rather than traveling from school to school.

This has greatly strengthened the rapport and working relationship between the attendance and guidance personnel and the schools they serve.

Collaboration With Community Based Organizations

Community School District 10 has developed many working relationships with community based organizations in the last decade and a half, often in conjunction with the alternative schools network. The collaborations with community organizations involved in the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program are extensions of these existing relationships, as in the Video Ink project and the Fordham Work-Study Project.

As in the past, according the Funded Programs Director Vivian Salit, the contracting process necessary for any subcontracting of services from a community based organization has been a "total nightmare," and a disincentive to collaboration for all but the most committed educators. The contracting process, which on the average takes six months to complete, seems to involve innumerable offices of the Central Board of Education, all wanting clarification and approval of the district's contractual agreements. The paperwork for the contract for the Fordham Work-Study Program was initiated in August, but the approved contract was not yet in place as of this February interview. Were it not for a purchase order approved by the community school board (permissible for amounts less than five thousand dollars),

the program would not have been able to begin.

The In-School Suspension Program at P.S. 94

When Sheldon Salzberg became principal of P.S. 94, there were approximately 450 students in the school. Within several years, as the local population changed from senior citizens to families with young children, the school population jumped to 1100, where it has remained ever since. Six classrooms have been divided in half with partitions to make twelve, the library serves as a classroom, and four first grades meet in what used to be the gymnasium.

The overcrowding at P.S. 94 is more than a physical problem. When a school is small, there is often both time and place for a student to take "time out" in moments of stress. With the larger population, coupled with the sometimes gradual and often drastic reductions of resources, the staff are overburdened with the details of everyday operation, and students' problems often must reach a higher level of intensity before they are the focus of attention.

Sheldon Salzberg and Arlen Berg, one of his teachers, had discussed the idea for an in-school suspension program when the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program was announced. Vivian Salit, Director of Funded Programs for the district, had been included in some of these discussions,and when she heard that the AIDP funds were approved, she asked Sheldon Salzberg to write up the program for the proposal.

The in-school suspension program works as part of the attendance improvement effort at P.S. 94. Those students who have been identified as "at-risk" are required to carry a daily behavior report

for teachers to sign, commenting on their punctuality and classroom behavior. (Although the target students initially complained about having to carry the report, many are now eager to have the form because it institutionalizes a contact with teachers, and, for many of the students, a contact that has become increasingly positive as their punctuality and behavior improve.) When one of the target students warrents a suspension, a letter is sent home informing the parent that the child will be suspended but is still to come to school, where the time is spent in a special program.

The old locker room has been converted into the classroom used by the program. It is small, but colorful and quiet. In it, the students on suspensions spend their two or three day period, doing classwork assigned by their classroom teachers, and participating in both individual and group guidance activities to help them understand how they came to be suspended and how they can change their behavior to avoid being suspended in the future. The entire day is spent with the program; the students are escorted to the lunchroom, where they eat with one of the program's staff members. Although the program was designed as an alternative means of dealing with serious in-school behavior problems for the target population, a student who has not been identified as "at-risk" but who has warrented suspension after the normal "ladder of referral" procedures have been followed, will also be sent to the program for the duration of the suspension.

The two staff members are a veteran teacher, Arlene Berg, and a bilingual paraprofessional. These two women begin each day at the

school door, greeting the students as they come in, noting whether any of the target students are missing, and detecting some problems before they have a chance to surface in the classroom. If necessary, they call parents in the morning to find out whether a student is ill, thus letting parents know that the child has not yet reported to school. In many cases, parents have thanked Arlene for these calls because they were unware that their children were not arriving in school promptly. Their work is supported by the services of an attendance aide for four hours each day. This enables the program to make immediate phone calls to parents when a target student is absent, and to make contact with parents when a non-target student has been absent for three consecutive days.

At one point, Arlene Berg, the paraprofessional, and the school security officer visited the video stores in the area where many children had been lingering before coming to school, and secured an agreement from most of them to close down their machines at 8:15 a.m. so the children would go to school. In one especially successful case, the store owner even called the school to report the presence of a student during school hours!

Mrs. Berg and the paraprofessional also regularly check the behavior reports of the target students, and spend a substantial amount of time working with the parents of the students with problems. Particularly at the elementary school level, a student's attendance problems are often as much, if not more, the problems of the parent. In some cases, the parents do not take the work of the elementary

school seriously, and keep their children home to help with housework or errands, or they take them on trips that mean missing a week of school at a time. These parents need to be educated that every day of school is important to their child's future so they will become supportive of good attendance practices. While many parents come in for conferences feeling hostile to the school, most eventually become cooperative when they understand that the in-school suspension program and the attendance improvement program are there to help their children.

It is difficult at this point to determine the long-range impact of this program. Curiously, more students have been suspended this year than ever before, but Sheldon Salzberg feels that this is actually a positive occurrence because it reflects the availability of a mechanism for dealing with students' problems before they reach extreme levels.

Comments on the Process

The magnitude of the resources provided to District Ten under AI/DP permitted the district to resolve the tension which troubled many districts between general attendance improvement and specific dropout prevention. Unlike District 8, which had to sacrifice depth of programming in order to meet its objective of providing base line attendance services in all schools, District Ten was able to increase its general services and develop or expand special efforts to meet the needs of the most troubled youngsters. These students were already included under the district's alternative school network; while their

problems may have included truancy, they were not expressly targeted as potential dropouts. Further, because the district had emphasized attendance services, when the relative austerity of the past few years had led others to abandon them, District Ten had better than average "standard operating procedures" for handling program expansion. And, again, a stable district administration undertook the program development phase in a collaborative way, and implementation of the design was entrusted to those who had participated in its development. When problems emerged with the Central Board of Education's ability to process the District's contract for services with Fordham University, the staff showed its commitment to the program and its resilience by encouraging the community school board to release special funds for that purpose. As a result of these various and felicitous conditions, the district was able to promptly and successfully develop and deliver nearly a million dollars in program services in a timely and effective manner.

Community School District #16

HOLDING POWER PROJECT

Demographic Characteristics

The Bedford-Stuyvesant area is an economically depressed, predominantly Black neighborhood in Brooklyn. The school population is 89.9% Black, with the remaining 10.1% almost entirely Hispanic. All the district's schools qualify as Title I schools, and 80.3% of the students are eligible for the Free Lunch program - one of the highest eligibility rates in the city. The district attendance rate is among the lowest in the city - 87.05% at the elementary school level, and 77.27% at the intermediate/junior school level. The district's mathematics and reading test scores are also significantly below the citywide averages. More than 21% of the students are reading below the State promotional levels, and therefore qualify for remedial assistance.

The Current Administration

The current Superintendent, Joyce R. Coppin, was appointed by Chancellor Frank Macchiarola two and a half years ago as a result of the inablility of the community school board to renew the contract of the former superintendent, Felton E. Lewis, or to agree upon a successor. After more than a year as acting superintendent, Mrs. Coppin became the formally appointed superintendent of the Community School Board in January of 1984. Although she is relatively new to the District, Mrs. Coppin has continued to work with many administrators with a long history of service in the district.

District Sixteen's Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program

The HOLDING POWER PROGRAM model in District 16's three intermediate and junior high schools originated in the 1983-84 school year with the Holding Power project in Junior High School 57. This project combined the use of the Telsol computerized telephone answering machine for notifying parents of students' absences with individual and group counseling sessions and a career education component based on the Adkins Life Skills program.

The Holding Power Program at Junior High School 57 was very successful. The Telsol machine's message "really shook some parents and students," according to the Deputy Superintendent Leonard Clarke. In a substantial number of cases, the parents had not been aware of their child's pattern of abseenteeism before this, and were eager to join forces with the school in solving the problem. In other cases, the parents themselves were a major part of the problem, sometimes keeping students home for various reasons, in conflict with state school attendance requirements. The program was able to encourage a more supportive home-school relationship.

The career education component of the Holding Power program at Junior High School 57 was introduced when interviews with students who had a record of chronic absenteeism revealed that a substantial number of these students were out of school seeking employment. (Some over age students were already old enough to find legal employment.) In addition, the program's designers felt that these students were

unfamiliar with the real demands and requirements of the outside world, in a specific job-related sense,and more generally as well. The career education and life skills workshops were intended to provide structured exposure to the skills and behaviors an individual needs to survive and succeed in life and to motivate students to continue their education, thus improving their chances of success when they eventually enter the labor market.

Even though the funds that enabled the district to run the Holding Power Program at Junior High School 57 were eliminated at the end of the year, the perceived success of the program was such that the district administration, with the support of the Community School Board, decided to expand the program to all three intermediate/junior high schools in the district with the newly announced Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention funds. The AI/DP funds were to be used to implement the Holding Power model in the two remaining intermediate/junior high schools, while the continuation of the program at JHS 57 was to be supported with tax-levy monies. In addition, the district decided that additional support for the program was needed for students with emotional problems, and a social worker that would work with all three schools was included in the AI/DP program.

The proposal itself was developed in a broadly participatory fashion. Superintendent Coppin called together representatives of many groups involved in the schools; parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, union representatives, and community organizations such as the 81st Precinct Community Council to discuss their needs and

concerns in order to develop a comprehensive attendance improvement/dropout prevention program. Unfortunately, Mrs. Frazier, the Guidance Supervisor for the district and the person later responsible for overseeing the implemention of the programs, was away on vaction during the proposal development process.

General Identification of Students With Attendance Problems

According to the District's proposal, a "district-wide survey of pupils will be conducted to identify a target population of students in grades kindergarten through nine." Those students with a history of sporadic attendance, chronic tardiness, low academic achievement and failure, as well as social, psychological, and emotional problems were to be included in the target population. These students then would be more closely monitored and given special services where necessary.

Once implemention of the HOLDING POWER PROGRAM began, however, the District decided to target the resources toward the junior high school level, allowing already existing programs within the distict (i.e. Alternatives to Special Education) to focus on the problem at the elementary school level.

Identification of Eighth Grade Students

At the beginning of the 1984-85 school year, Superintendent Coppin met with Deputy Superintendent Leonard Clarke, Guidance Supervisor Mrs Frazier, District Attendance Teacher Mr. Ruiz, and Coordinator of Program Alternatives Ronald Ivey. Using both the suggestions in the guidelines and their past experience in working with truancy and chronic absenteeism, this group generated a profile of an

"at-risk" student that includes excessive absenses, over age, academic failure, and behavioral difficulties, as well as unlawful detainment at home by a parent, unlawful employment during or after school hours, and problems associated with a pattern of neglect and/or illness.

Each intermediate or junior high school principal then met individually with members of the group to be briefed on the new screening process. The principals in turn met with their counselors and support staff to screen records and produce the target list of at-risk students in each school.

Superintendent Coppin pointed out that although this seems a thorough definition of the "at-risk" student, its primary focus is on the attendance problem and tends to filter out other students who may be equally at risk of dropping out of school. (Drug use and in-school truancy are two problems not included in the definition which often foreshadow serious academic problems.) In fact, she said, if one defined the "at-risk" student in broader terms, the target population might be twice as large as the one defined in the AI/DP program.

Services Provided to the "at-risk" Student

The array of services that Community School District 16 proposed to provide for those students identified as potential dropouts was broad and varied, reflecting the range of concerns voiced in the planning meeting held to develop the proposal. Some of the services were more easily implemented than others, particularly in light of the

problems the district encountered in staffing their programs. The services, which are targeted to the intermediate/junior high school level, include:

- Outreach to parents
- Individual and small group counseling of students and parents
- Telsol notification of parents for daily monitoring of at-risk students' attendance
- Alternative educational programs for at-risk student based on the Adkins Life Skills curriculum
- A parent-student trip to improve family communication of students and families in the target group
- Guidance and counseling focus on improving self-image, confidence, motivation, and responsibility levels of target students
- Mentoring relationships with adult volunteers and senior citizens
- Better articulation with elementary schools, including limited departmentalization in grades 5 & 6
- School-business collaborations to provide advise and support to the proposed groups

The implementation of these programs has not approached the level of services described in the proposal. To a certain extent, this is a product of a proposal development process that was not integrally

related to the eventual provision of services. Some of the proposed activities attempt to respond to very real needs and problems which do contribute to the truancy and dropout problem, but these activities require a level of staff and organizational expertise that is not available now in the district, rendering these proposals extremely difficult to implement. At the time of this research, the district had not yet implemented the parent-student retreat, community work experience, mentoring programs, partial departmentalization at the fifth and sixth grade levels, and the development of school-business collaboration.

Some of the difficult implementation problems, however, came from outside the district. As in many other districts, contract problems with the Telsol and RIKA computerized answering machines have substantially delayed the implementation of this central element of the program (e.g. IS 324 and JHS 35; JHS 57 purchased a Telsol machine last year as part of its Holding Power Program). In addition, the district had not by February been able to hire the attendance teacher listed in the proposal. According to Superintendent Coppin, there were no names on the list of those who had taken the qualifying examination. The only alternative considered -- hiring a "common branches" teacher who would need preliminary training of some sort and providing attendance training -- was rejected because of past experience with the State Education Deparment in securing even minor changes in the approved proposal.

Without the attendance teacher and the Telsol machine, many

students in the "at-risk" population are not receiving adequate services. According to Superintendent Coppin, "They simply are not available to be served."

Despite the implementation problems, however, by February 1985 the HOLDING POWER PROGRAM existed in some form in all three intermediate/junior high schools in the district. Because the district received relatively early notification of approval (October 18, 1984), most new staff were hired early in the fall term. After an intensive orientation program run by Mrs. Frazier, the Guidance Supervisor, in the District Office, the new staff spent two weeks in JHS 57 observing how the program there worked and getting advice and assistance from the program director there on setting up new programs. Now the HOLDING POWER staff in each school meet weekly with the guidance and counseling staff at their school, where they are considered part of the overall support team for that school. They also meet monthly with Mrs. Frazier as a group, and participate in monthly training sessions she conducts for all guidance and support staff working in the district's schools.

Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations

Although developed collaboratively, the AI/DP program in District 16 involves little or no coordination of services with community-based agencies and organizations. According to Superintendent Coppin and Deputy Superintendent Leonard Clarke, the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood has relatively few organizations and agencies with which the district could work jointly. In fact, the best funded and organized facilities in this neighborhood frequently are the

schools themselves. The District Office, however, has compiled an extensive Community Resource Guide to help parents locate a variety of services both in the intermediate area and in the borough. And, according to one parent activist who worked on the preparation of this guidebook, many of the organizations have been involved in school-based programs for many years.

The HOLDING POWER PROGRAM Intermediate School 324

The HOLDING POWER PROGRAM at Intermediate School 324 is housed in an airy and well-lit room on the third floor of this attractive modern school. While the school is still waiting for its Telsol (RIKA) machine, Ms. Jean Barbero, a guidance counselor and the director of the AI/DP program here, meets with students individually one period a week, and runs group sessions twice each week that combine counseling with career education activities. In general, those students Ms. Barbero has managed to pull back into school are eager to come to these sessions. To begin with, according to Ms. Barbero, the sessions are not classes, and thus are not perceived as a pressured situation to be avoided. In addition, the activities that accompany the counseling address the very real and pressing concerns of these youngsters about what awaits them on the outside world.

Thirty-five students who had been identified by February as "at-risk," attend the HOLDING POWER PROGRAM, although some have not yet returned to regular school attendance. Fifteen new students also are being added to the register based on their attendance and academic records during the fall term.

In addition to working with students, Ms. Barbero holds regular workshops for the parents of the students in the program. Some of these meetings have dealt with subjects like grades and homework assistance, while others have tried to bring together parents in an informal support group. Although not all the parents participate, there is a solid nucleus of about seven parents, and the number of parents attending the meetings is increasing. The lack of a telephone in Ms. Barbero's room, in addition to the lack of a computerized contact telephone machine has made it difficult to have the level of contact with parents and students that Ms. Barbero feels the program needs to succeed at its original purposes.

According to the principal of IS 324, Mr. Frank Mickens, the program has been a welcome addition to the school's guidance and support staff. Although there is no data yet to show the impact of the program (and there are 1100 students in grades 6 through 9 in this school), anecdotal data suggest that there has already been a marked improvement in the attendance behavior of some of the students in the program. Mr. Mickens attributes this success to Ms. Barbero; "She's a pro," he says succinctly. He describes her as energetic in establishing the program despite the difficulties getting the Telsol (RIKA) machine, and is a skilled in getting the students involved.

Comments on the Process

Efforts to launch the District 16 AI/DP program unearthed a classic implementation dilemma. The program planning or brainstorming phase of the project, an exciting and more than averagely creative

enterprise in the hands of the district's superintendent, produced a complex and interesting program. After careful consideration of the characteristics of dropout-prone youngsters the team of community and professional people, concluded, for example, that since parents themselves often play a role in discouraging school attendance, that counseling should be available to parents as well as students. The difficulty lay in the internal capacity of the district to implement the various phases of the design, including retreats with parents. This capacity was not adequately assessed immediately after the brainstorming phase. This happened in part because the person responsible for implemention, who to some extent would have naturally provided the needed reality test, happened to be away. And, it occurred in part because when the assumed capacities of the district to hire, for example, guidance counsellors turned out not to be a reality, the district did not immediately develop a contingency plan.

Given what we know about dropouts, the strength of the program was its imaginative and appropriately complex design. The weakness, depending on one's bias was either the failure to evaluate the plan in light of the district's standard operating procedures and simplify it or maintain the plan and put alternative strategies into place when the standard operating procedures were found to be inoperable.

CHAPTER V

Issues And Perspectives In Implementation

Studies in implementation almost inevitably frustrate readers committed to social progress through government intervention. Implementation studies confront us with the gap between our best intentions, our brightest ideas, and our real world accomplishments. As the AI/DP drama unfolded in New York City, one confronted many frustrating gaps, but one also saw a progressive closing of those gaps and an increasingly effective use of vital resources. If the political conditions operating this year continue to operate and the implementation problems continue to be addressed forthrightly, over time, AI/DP can make a difference in New York City.

The strength behind the implementation of this year's program was the commitment of people at every stage in the process. Jose Serrano, the sponsor of the bill, pressed the unresolved policy issues long after the bill was enacted into law. As his administration took hold, Chancellor Quinones paid increasing attention to the program. He appointed an especially able administrator to oversee the effort. He opened his door to those concerned about the policy; he listened to their views, and as he developed convictions, he conveyed those convictions to senior administrators charged with day to day decision making in a way which set a positive tone and fostered improvements. At the school and district level there was a parallel concern that the effort go well and that youngsters receive appropriate services. All

of this was repeatedly refueled by a perceptive and vigilant public -- the legislators, the press, the advocacy organizations, and a host of local politicians gearing up for the mayoral campaign. Failure would not go unnoticed.

Alongside the broader positive political climate, there were three major difficulties confronting the AI/DP program effort. The first was the lack of policy. The second was the over-reliance by administrators at every stage in the process on standard operating procedures in what were clearly non-standard circumstances. The third, was a variation of the second, the limited capacity of the school system to respond quickly and proactively.

The legislature was equivocal regarding the intention of the program. Dropout prevention and attendance improvement are clearly related, but when distributional questions arose, a hidden tension emerged between the two. Meting out resources for general improvements that bolster the overall capacity of a school or district to monitor attendance competed with targeting resources for intensive services for particularly at risk students. Further, for reasons no doubt complex, the legislation enabled collaboration with community organizations, but did not require or aggressively encourage it. To its discredit, the Board of Education's policy initiatives did not substantially clarify these important distributional and programmatic issues.

An over-reliance on standard operating procedures led to some serious and embarrassing problems for all the major administrative

bodies. In developing the formula, the Chancellor's Office arranged with the Office of Budget to distribute funds to the divisions and districts roughly based on the severity of reading and attendance problems. Relying on the technical expertise of the budget staff, senior policy officials neither fully understood nor challenged the assumptions written into the formula. When advocacy organizations said that the method for calculating attendance problems benefitted larger districts at the expense of smaller districts with greater numbers of truants, the system was hard pressed to defend itself. No one had established clear priorities for funding, nor tested the formula against common sense criteria such as whether districts with demonstrably greater problems received more money. A failure to test the capacity of the system to deliver what was needed was also behind the Telsol/Rika dilemma. Officials simply assumed that the existing contract with Telsol for automatic telephone dialing machines would cover the geometrically expanded demand generated by AI/DP, but it didn't. New bids had to be submitted and a new company selected, all of which delayed by several months the availability of equipment to many districts.

The over-reliance on standard operating procedures without testing them against new circumstances was not unique to the Central Board of Education. The districts assumed they could locate the new staff their proposals called for, but quite frequently found they could not hire these licensed person as few were available. The State Education Department in its turn assumed proposals could be

reviewed, modified and approved using the mail system for transmittal but this took too long and there was no travel budget to facilitate the process.

Underlying the over-reliance on standard operating procedures were a variety of capacity problems. The State Education Department did not orchestrate the resources necessary for the most efficient processing of proposals because they were experiencing budget cuts and lay-offs throughout the Department. As AI/DP was a new feature on the education horizon, the Board of Education did not immediately know how to manage it. To make matters worse, staff members were given little time to learn how to manage it, and the attention of senior policy makers, given the organizational crisis, was understandably elsewhere. The districts were similarly handicapped by a lack of experience in dropout prevention efforts as most had dropped services during the fiscal crisis. Those that did have dropout programs were more aware of the substantive and procedural issues. In addition, few districts had favorable enough organizational and political conditions to enable them to move rapidly. Of course, some districts -- because they had a strong planning team, because they characteristically saw that planning and implementation were linked, because they had the confidence of the school board and broader community and were able to make modifications and garner resources flexibly, and because their communities had strong, supportive agencies with which to coordinate programs -- had more organizational capacity than others.

Having articulated the various implementation problems, it must be re-emphasized that the system's resourcefulness, its knowledge,

its capacity grew appreciably over time, and that AI/DP programs were eventually implemented. The difficulties getting this program on-line were primarily organizational not political. Aside from the issue of collaboration with community organizations, "interests" were not in conflict.

Spreading resources across the school system, we conclude, is relatively uncomplicated politically. Nonetheless the difficulties encountered in doing even this alert us to the magnitude of the challenge that awaits us. While adolescents have manifold problems, many leave school because of the nature of school itself. They haven't learned very much there and their relationships with teachers and other students is unsatisfying. To make education more rewarding to these youngsters, we must improve the overall climate of the schools and especially improve what goes on in classroooms. That will be far harder than adding supportive services. It will require far more staff development and technical assistance, far more organizational challenge and truly charismatic leadership. Still it must be done if we are to enhance appreciably the odds which poor and minority youngsters face in graduating from a city school with a meaningful diploma.

Policy Recommendations

1. As the legislature is interested in funding dropout prevention efforts linked to community organizations that will serve middle and senior high school youngsters absent more than ten days per semester, it should say so.
2. To the extent the legislature does not explicitly state whom should

be served and how they should be served, the Board of Education should. Two considerations must be balanced. The first is programmatic. What ought to be done should guide the distribution of resources. The second is fairness. Schools/districts which have greater need should receive more support.

3. To garner public support, priorities must be put forth in a way that creates a dramatic vision of the policy in the public mind. That vision must be reinforced in the local administrative context by explicit guidelines, careful monitoring and technical assistance.

Program Planning Recommendations

1. After clarifying their policy and distributional intentions, the Board of Education must test and strengthen the capacity of its internal operations to manage the program. The onerous procedures at Central to which districts submit in order to contract with external agencies seeking to provide services is an example of an in-house obstacle which interferes with the Chancellor's stated intention that collaborations occur. It should be overcome.
2. At the district level program planning should be a collaborative effort which draws on the expertise of the districts' senior staff and relevant others in the community and schools. It should also be an articulated process involving those who will be responsible for overseeing implementation. As with the Board of Education, the districts must articulate every step necessary for them to realize their plan and test the capacity of their organiza-

tion to implement those steps, developing contingency plans whenever implemention is dependent upon shaky resources such as the availability of new staff or the processing of new contracts.

Long Term Recommendations

1. Though it is easier to implement simple programs that rely on standard operating procedures than complex programs that require new alliances and resources, the lesson the system must learn is one of managing innovation, not avoiding it.
2. Toward that end it is especially important for the responsibilities of the Central Board of Education and the districts to be clarified so that specificity does not lead to restriction and stifle local creativity.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Responding to the state request for proposals, the Office of the New York City Chancellor requested each of the thirty-two districts, plus the Divisions of Special Education and High Schools, to submit proposals. Faced with thirty-four unique proposals, the first step in selecting sites for this study was to limit the scope of fact-gathering to the community school districts. Unlike the divisions, the districts had never been involved in an extensive, coordinated dropout prevention effort, and therefore represented a greater challenge to the school system. Further, the thirty-two districts, with their various approaches to the problem codified in their proposals, represented a better unit of investigation for analytic purposes.

The second step was to establish baseline controls. The districts were grouped by their socioeconomic characteristics (based on 1980-81 data on the percentage of youngsters receiving free lunch) and by the severity of their truancy problems (based upon 1982-83 attendance data). Both sets of data were related to identify districts with roughly comparable socioeconomic characteristics and roughly comparable rates of truancy. Table I displays this information.

Table 1
Districts Arrayed by Socio-Economic Characteristics
and Average Daily Attendance Data

Percent Eligible Free Lunch	Attendance Data		
	High (90-92.9%)	Average (86-88.9%)	Low (83-85.9%)
Low (25-49.9%)	22, 25, 26, 31		
Medium (50-74.9)	2, 18, 24, 29	11, 20, 21, 27, 28, 30	
High (75-99.9%)		3, 13, 7, 6, 15, 17, 19	1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 23, 32

After careful consideration of the options, it was decided to select sites from within the group housing the most economically disadvantaged districts with the highest truancy. That group, for one, housed more tricts than any other, i.e. it was the most typical placement and, for another, it housed the most needy districts.

Having previously reviewed the proposals of each of the districts and divisions, the second cut to narrow the sample involved selecting sites that represented the array of programs designed by the thirty-two districts. Table 2 describes the program options; a star designates low SES/high truancy districts.

Table 2
Districts by Program Type

Program Emphasis	Districts
Truant Identification	6, 8*, 17*, 14*
I.D./Counselling	1*, 3, 4*, 9*, 13, 21, 22, 23*, 25, 29, 30
Academic/Employment Component	2, 5*, 11, 12*, 15, 16*, 26, 28, 32*
I.D. & Turnaround	7, 18, 20, 24, 27
Miscellaneous	19, 31, 10*

From among each of the five program categories, at least one low SES/high truancy district was selected for case study. Efforts were made to select districts that were fairly typical of the program type and to avoid those with extreme levels of political or organizational unrest as access to these districts would be problematic. District 8 represents districts with programs that emphasized the identification and location of truants. District 1 represents districts which emphasized counselling as a follow up to identification. District 16 was selected from among those districts which included an academic component or a work preparation component in addition to counselling and identification. Because the Turnaround Program was a relatively frequent program choice by the districts as a whole, but not represented among the lowest SES districts, District 7 was added to the study. Ten was the choice among districts with difficult to categorize programs, although it is hardly the examplar as those districts' proposals as they were unique. The case study pool then included districts 1, 7, 8, 10, & 16.

SOURCE NOTES

The introduction and first three chapters make frequent reference to documents and private correspondence readily available. The source notes are below. The case studies in Chapter 4 are based, in part, on confidential interviews, and we do not footnote these references. Where the material is public, the source is named in the text.

INTRODUCTION

1. Boyd, Gerald M. "Dropout Rate Is Up Sharply in U.S. Schools, Survey Says," The New York Times. January 6, 1984.
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2. The Dropout Report. New York City Board of Education. Brooklyn, New York: Spring, 1983.
3. Racial and Ethnic High School Dropout Rates in New York City: A Summary Report. ASPIRA of New York, Inc. Brooklyn, New York: June, 1983.
4. Quoted in Testimony by Betty Holmes for the United Federation of Teachers before The New York State Assembly Committee on Education. Park West High School, New York, New York: March 9, 1984.
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6. Quoted in Testimony by Amina Abdur Rahman for the Educational Priorities Panel before the The New York State Assembly Committee on Education. Park West High School, New York, New York: March 9, 1934.

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9. Testimony by Thomas J. Pisa for the National Education Association of New York before the The New York State Assembly Committee on Education. Park West High School, New York, New York: March 9, 1984.

10. Conversation with an State legislative aid. Albany, aide. New York: March 12, 1985.

11. Education Law 3602(25): Enacted by Section 41 of the Laws relating to Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention.

12. Telephone conversation with State legislative aide. January 10, 1984.

CHAPTER II

1. "Dropout Aid To Go To Early Grades," The New York Times. May 22, 1984.

2. "Introduction to Guidelines for Applicants," AI/DP Implementing Commissioner's Regulation 175.23. Bureau of Pupil Personnel Services, New York State Education Department. Albany, New York: May 16, 1984.

3. Special Circular No. 16. Office of the Chancellor. New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, New York: May 25, 1984.

4. Letters from Eileen Foley to Chancellor Nathan Quinones on behalf of PEA and other advocacy organizations, May 1, 1984 and June 18, 1984.

5. Letter from Chancellor Nathan Quinones to Eileen Foley. July 5, 1984.

6. Letters from Eileen Foley on behalf of PEA and other advocacy organizations to Assemblyman Jose Serrano and Commissioner Gordon Ambach, August 27, 1984.

7. Joyce Purnick. "Legislator Faults City's Dropout-Prevention Plans," The New York Times. September 3, 1984.

8. Ibid. Purnick.

9. Op. Cit. Education Law 3602(25).

10. Op. Cit. Foley. 8/27/84.

11.. Op. Cit. Foley. 8/27/84.

12. Conversation with James Moore, Director, Bureau of Pupil Personnel Services, New York State Education Department, Albany, New York: 12/10/84.

13. Op. Cit. Commissioner's Regulations.

14. Op. Cit. Conversation with James Moore.

15. Op. Cit. Education Law 3602(25).

16. Conversation with Alfred E. Miller, Executive Director Federation Employment and Guidance Services. New York, New York: August, 1984.

17. Letter from Jose Serrano to Nathan Quinones.

August 22, 1984.

18. Memorandum to Community Superintendents by Louise Latty, Chief Executive for Instruction, New York City Board of Education. Brooklyn, New York: June 19, 1984.

19. Op. Cit. Foley. 8/27/84.

CHAPTER III

1. Op. Cit. Conversation with Toscano. 3/12/84.

2. Anthony Alvarado was suspended March 25, 1984; Nathan Quinones was made Acting Chancellor at that point. AI/DP was enacted in the first week of April, 1984.

3. Op. Cit. special Circular 16.

4. Op. Cit. Foley. May 1, 1984 and June 18, 1984.

5. Op. Cit. Commissioner's Regulation.

6. A sixty period is normally allotted for groups to comment on Commissioner's Regulations; this was not possible given the AI/DP constraints according to James Moore. Ibid 12/10/84. conversation.

7. Ibid. Moore.

CHAPTER IV

1. Special Circular No. 29. Office of the Chancellor. New York City Board of Education. May 22, 1985.

2. Each district requesting funds was required to complete Form AI/DP 1: Application to the Commissioner of Education for State Aid for Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention Under the Provision of Title 25 Section 3602 of the State Education Law.

3. For background regarding the committee's work see Board

of Education Minutes of the February 7, 1985 AI/DP Community Collaboration Subcommittee by Susanna Doyle and the January 10, 1985 Summary Report to the Members of the Subcommittee on Attendance Data needs by Charles Troub.

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